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(54) **Protruding end clamp stops for plastic reclosable fastener.**

(57) A fastener structure for a thermoplastic bags, comprising: a pair of flexible plastic strips (14,15) adapted to be secured to the facing side walls along the mouth of a thermoplastic bag (B); reclosable interlocking male and female profile (16,17) elements on the respective strips; and a slider (10) adapted to open and close the male and female profile elements; and end stops (30a,30b) located at the opposite ends of the reclosable fastener. Each of the end stops is formed from the material at the opposite ends of said reclosable fastener and protrudes from said fastener a distance adequate to engage the slider (10), and to prevent movement of the slider past the respective ends of the bag.

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The present invention relates to a fastener structure for a thermoplastic bag.

Plastic reclosable fasteners or zippers with sliders are well known in the art. The plastic zippers include a pair of male and female fastener elements in the form of reclosable interlocking rib and groove elements with a slider for opening and closing the rib and groove elements. In the manufacture of thermoplastic film bags, a pair of these male and female fastener elements extend along the mouth of the bag and these male and female elements are adapted to be secured in any suitable manner to the flexible walls of the thermoplastic film bags. These elements may be integral marginal portions of such walls or they may be extruded separately and thereafter attached to the walls along the mouth of the bag.

Various arrangements have been utilized heretofore to maintain the slider on the zipper. In one of the more conventional arrangements the slider includes a separator finger that extends down between the integral locking rib and groove elements as the slider is moved from one edge of the bag to the other edge of the bag. When the bag is opened, the only thing to stop the slider was the side seam at the edge of the bag when the slider finger comes into contact with it. This prior art is described in US-A-3,790,992.

In that patent there is disclosed an improvement wherein the heat seals that join the rib and groove elements are wider at one end than the second edge of the bag and the wider seal being of a width at least equal to the length of the slider from its closing end to the finger so that the slider will remain fully on the bag at the end of its travel when opening the bag. The patent points out that these seal areas provide stops for the slider.

Another arrangement for providing stops at the end of the zipper is disclosed in US-A-3,259,951. In that patent the opposite ends of the interlocking or mating strips are permanently joined or sealed to each other at the ends with stop members sealed between the opposite ends of these members to stop the longitudinal movement of the slider therealong.

It would be desirable to provide a plastic bag having a zipper that is operated by a slider wherein the zipper is terminated with protruding end stops formed from the zipper to prevent the slider from moving off past the ends of the zipper. With this arrangement it is not necessary to add an additional stop element to the zipper nor to rely on the strength of the seam at the edge of the bag for preventing the slider from moving past the ends of the bag.

It is an object of the present invention to provide a plastic bag having a fastener that is operated by a slider wherein the fastener is terminated

with protruding end stops formed from the fastener to engage the slider and prevent the slider from moving off past the ends of the zipper.

According to one aspect of the invention there is provided a fastener structure for a thermoplastic bags, comprising a pair of flexible plastic strips adapted to be secured to the facing side walls along the mouth of a thermoplastic bag; reclosable interlocking male and female profile elements on the respective strips; and a slider adapted to open and close the male and female profile elements,

characterised by:

end stop means located at the opposite ends of said reclosable fastener, each of said end stop means being formed from the material at the opposite ends of said reclosable fastener and protruding from said fastener a distance adequate to engage the slider, and to prevent movement of the slider past the respective ends of the bag.

Preferably said end stop means protrudes from at least one of the sides of said structure. More preferably said end stop means protrudes from both of the sides of said fastener structure.

According to another aspect of the invention there is provided a method of forming end stops for the slider of the fastener structure described above, comprising:

clamping and sealing together a pair of the flexible plastic strips and the facing side walls at a seal area at the ends of the bag to reduce the material thickness of the pair of flexible plastic strips and the facing side walls of the bag sandwiched therebetween and concurrently increasing the thickness of an adjacent area of the reclosable fastener adjacent the seal area to provide protruding structure from the fastener thereby providing protruding end stops for preventing movement of the slider past the ends of the bag.

Preferably the protruding end stops are formed by ultrasonically smashing the adjacent area of the reclosable fastener.

According to a further aspect of the invention there is provided a thermoplastic bag comprising a pair of facing side walls defining an open mouth of one end of the bag, and a fastener structure as described above disposed along said open mouth.

Reference is now made to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figs. 1a and 1b are fractional elevational views showing the opposite ends of the top of a thermoplastic plastic bag with protruding end stops on the plastic reclosable fastener in accordance with the present invention; and

Fig. 2 is a perspective view showing the method of forming the protruding end stops on the plastic reclosable fastener.

Referring to Figs. 1a, 1b and 2, there is illustrated a thermoplastic bag B having a plastic slider 10 and a profiled plastic reclosable fastener or zipper 11 with end stops 30a, 30b embodying the present invention. The slider 10 and zipper 11 are particularly suited for thermoplastic bags and the like and the slider 10 has been illustrated in Figs. 1a and 1b assembled on the zipper 11 at the top edge or mouth of a thermoplastic bag B.

In Fig. 1a the slider 10 has been illustrated at the left hand end of the zipper 11 which is the closed end. In Fig. 1b the zipper 10 has been illustrated at the right hand end of the zipper 11 which is the opened end of the zipper. In opening and closing the zipper 11 it will be understood that the slider 10 will move from the closed end in Fig. 1a to the opened end in Fig. 1b and vice versa.

The bag B may be made from any suitable thermoplastic film such for example as polyethylene or polypropylene or equivalent material. The bag B is formed by a pair of flexible plastic sheets 12 and 13 joined at the bottom and having a top edge, with a pair of flexible plastic strips 14 and 15 having separable plastic means extending along the length thereof comprising reclosable interlocking male and female profile elements in the form of rib and groove elements 16 and 17 on the respective strips to form the zipper 11. This is best shown in Fig. 2.

The strips 14 and 15 may be extruded separately and attached to the respective sides of the bag mouth or the strips 14 and 15 may be extruded integral with the sides of the bag mouth. The strips 14 and 15 include profiled tracks 18 and 19 extending along the length thereof and parallel to the rib and groove elements 16 and 17 and the rib and groove elements 16 and 17 preferably have complimentary cross-sectional shapes such that they are closed by pressing the bottom of the elements together first and then rolling the elements to a closed position toward the top thereof. The cross-sectional shapes of the interlocking male and female elements having the rib and groove profiles 16 and 17 are disclosed in WO 91/13564.

It is to be understood that the present invention is not limited to the shapes of the rib and groove profiles illustrated herein and that other shapes can be utilized in connection with the present invention. It is also to be understood that the present invention is not limited to the particular construction of the slider 10 disclosed herein and that other zipper sliders may be utilized in connection with the present invention.

As may be seen in Fig. 2 the slider 10 straddles the zipper 11 at the top of the bag B and is adapted for opening and closing the reclosable fastener elements 16 and 17 of the zipper 11. The slider 10 is formed from a single piece of molded

plastic comprising a separator finger 9 and interlocking complimentary structure moving along the zipper 11. The separator finger 9 cooperates with the zipper 11 in such a manner as to provide a self-locking feature for the slider and a leakproof bag. The slider 10 may be molded from any suitable plastic such for example as nylon, polypropylene, polystyrene, Delrin or ABS.

Referring to Fig. 2 it will be seen that the slider 10 is of the foldable type with wings 21 and 22 which have been folded down at the hinge structure 21a and 21b located at the top of the slider body 20 so that the wings are in the folded sidewall position against the edges of the slider body 20. The depending legs 20a and 20b are positioned on the outer side of the strips 14 and 15 and the body 20 of the slider 10 rests on the top of the tracks 18 and 19.

When the sidewalls 21 and 22 are in the folded position as shown in Fig. 2 a compression-type latching mechanism (not shown) locks the sidewalls 21 and 22 in folded position with the depending legs 20a and 20b. In this assembled position, the shoulders 21c and 22c (not shown) on the sidewalls 21 and 22 are positioned beneath the bottom of the fastener elements 16 and 17 to prevent the slider 10 from being lifted off the zipper 11. The foldable depending sidewalls 21 and 22 extend from an opening end 10a of the slider 10 to a closing end 10b.

It will be noted that the main slider body 20 and the separator finger 9 are wider at the opening end 10a than at the closing end 10b. Similarly the sidewalls 21 and 22 and the depending legs 20a and 20b are spaced wider apart at the opening end 10a of the slider 10 to permit the separation of the rib and groove elements 16 and 17 by the finger 9 engage the tracks 18 and 19 and are spaced sufficiently close together at the closing end 10b of the slider to press the rib and groove elements 16 and 17 into interlocking relationship as the slider 10 is moved in a fastener closing direction as illustrated by the arrow in Fig. 1a. The arrow in Fig. 1b illustrates movement of the slider 10 in the fastener opening direction.

Referring again to Figs. 1a and 1b it will be seen that the opposite ends of the zipper 11 are provided with end stops 30a, 30b. Each of the end stops 30a, 30b is formed from the material at the opposite ends of the zipper 11 and protrude from the zipper a distance adequate to engage the slider 10 and prevent the slider from going past the respective ends of the zipper and coming off the bag.

The opposite ends of the profile elements 16, 17 of the zipper track are ultrasonically smashed to provide the end stop structure 30a, 30b protruding from the fastener or zipper 11 a distance adequate

to engage the slider 10 and prevent movement of the slider past the respective ends of the bag. As may be seen in Fig. 2 a pair of reciprocating anvils 31 and 32 are employed to perform the smashing of the zipper track ends.

The anvils 31 and 32 are each provided with cooperating recesses 31a, 31b and 32a, 32b which engage the opposite sides of the zipper 11 and produce protruding bumps on the opposite sides of the zipper ends in the form of end stops 30a and 30b which interfere with the movement of the slider 10 past the ends of the bag. The end stop 30a will engage the opening end 10a of the slider 10 by engaging the end of the shoulder 21c. A double anvil arrangement is shown in Fig. 2 to concurrently ultrasonically smash the other end of the adjacent zipper 11 on the adjacent bag B to produce the end stop 30b. When the slider 10 is moved to the opposite end of the bag as shown in Fig. 1b the closing end 10b of the slider will engage the end stop 30b.

From the foregoing description it will be seen that the end stops 30a and 30b are formed by clamping and sealing together the pair of flexible plastic strips 14, 15 and the facing sidewalls at a seal area at the opposite ends of the bag to reduce the material thickness of the pair of flexible plastic strips and the facing sidewalls of the bag sandwiched therebetween and concurrently increasing the thickness of the adjacent area of the reclosable fastener 11 adjacent the seal area to provide the protruding stop structure 30a and 30b from the fastener thereby providing protruding end stops 30a and 30b for preventing movement of the slider 10 past the ends of the bag.

It is to be understood that anvils of other shapes than those illustrated in Fig. 2 may be utilized in producing the protruding structure at the ends of the zipper 11 so long as the end stops are produced from the material at the ends of the zipper. In this way the zipper will be provided with end stops which prevent the slider 10 from going past the end of the zipper and coming off the bag but has eliminated the necessity for providing additional structure separate from the zipper for producing the end stops.

While a preferred embodiment of the invention has been described and illustrated, it is to be understood that further modifications thereof may be made within the scope of the appended claims.

Claims

1. A fastener structure for a thermoplastic bags, comprising a pair of flexible plastic strips adapted to be secured to the facing side walls along the mouth of a thermoplastic bag; reclosable interlocking male and female profile

elements on the respective strips; and a slider adapted to open and close the male and female profile elements,

characterised by:

end stop means located at the opposite ends of said reclosable fastener, each of said end stop means being formed from the material at the opposite ends of said reclosable fastener and protruding from said fastener a distance adequate to engage the slider, and to prevent movement of the slider past the respective ends of the bag.

2. A fastener structure according to claim 1 wherein said end stop means protrudes from at least one of the sides of said structure.
3. A fastener structure according to claim 1 or 2 wherein said end stop means protrudes from both of the sides of said fastener structure.
4. A method of forming end stops for the slider of a fastener structure defined in any of claims 1 to 3, comprising:

clamping and sealing together a pair of the flexible plastic strips and the facing side walls at a seal area at the ends of the bag to reduce the material thickness of the pair of flexible plastic strips and the facing side walls of the bag sandwiched therebetween and concurrently increasing the thickness of an adjacent area of the reclosable fastener adjacent the seal area to provide protruding structure from the fastener thereby providing protruding end stops for preventing movement of the slider past the ends of the bag.

5. A method according to claim 4 wherein the protruding end stops are formed by ultrasonically smashing the adjacent area of the reclosable fastener.
6. A thermoplastic bag comprising a pair of facing side walls defining an open mouth of one end of the bag, and a fastener structure as defined in any of claims 1 to 3 disposed along said open mouth.

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FIG. 1a

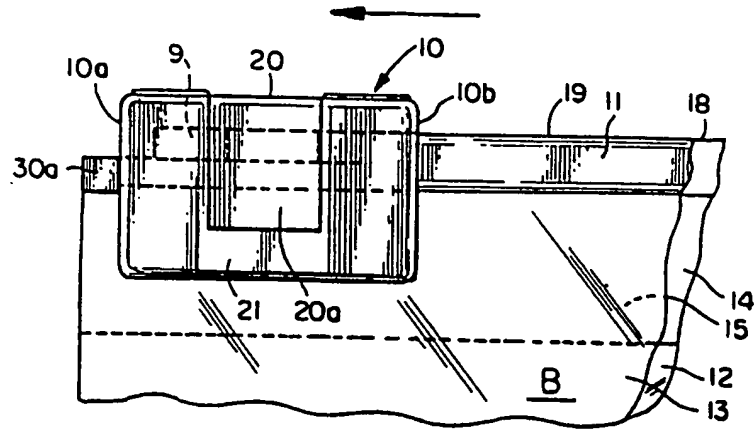
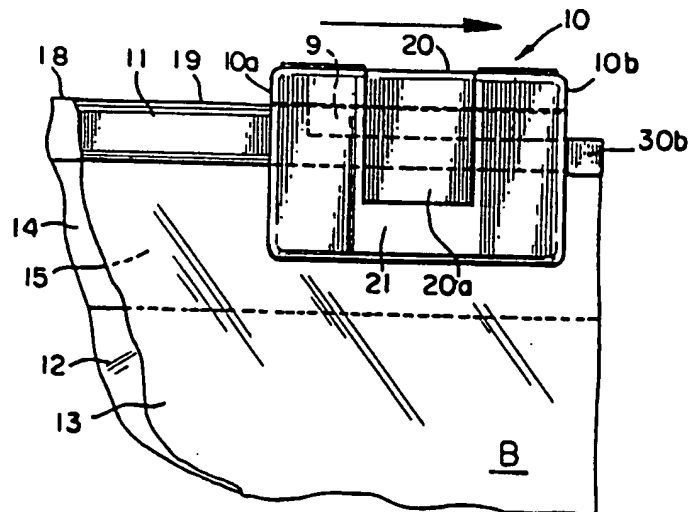
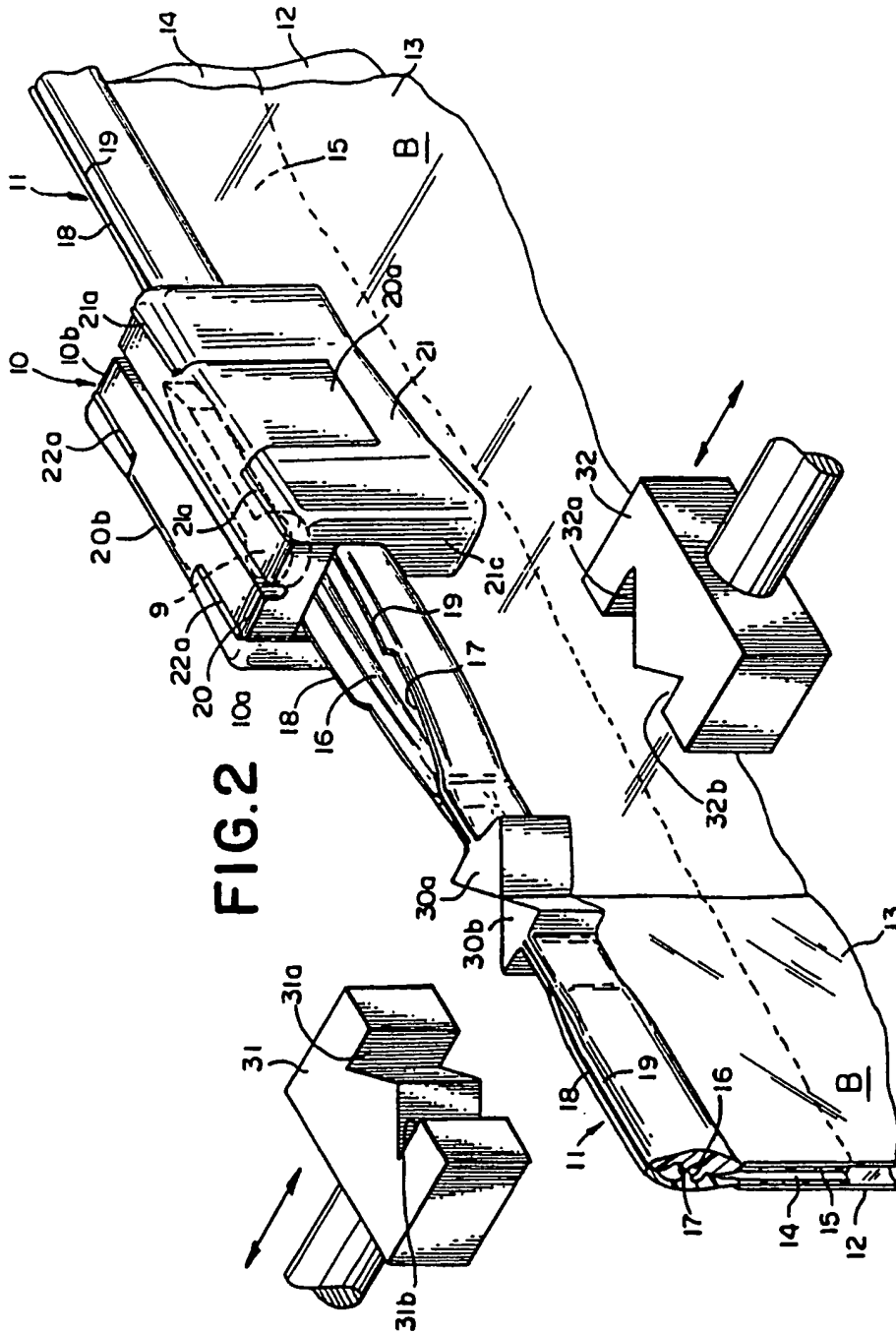


FIG. 1b



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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number

EP 92 30 1877

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl.5)
A, D	US-A-3 790 992 (MINIGRIP INC.) * column 2, line 7 - column 3, line 50; figures 1-5 *	1	A44B19/36 A44B19/16
A, D	US-A-3 259 951 (M. A. ZIMMERMAN) * column 2, line 66 - line 71; figures 1,2 *	1	
A	US-A-3 986 914 (H. KEITH HOWARD)		
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl.5)
			A44B B65D B29D B21D B31B B29C
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 23 JUNE 1992	Examiner GARNIER F. M. A. C.
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS			
X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document		T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons @ : member of the same patent family, corresponding document	